



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

A GAME OF WEI-CH'I.

By JULIAN CROSEY.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

IT seems an easy thing to write a tale about Chinamen for one who, from residence in their country, may be supposed to know the 'local colour.' But in reality nothing could be harder; no character lends itself less readily to the demands of fiction than the Chinese character. A story, to be interesting, requires life, emotion; it requires the palpitation of humanity in its incidents, and the colour of a life which is immediately recognised as real. But Chinese life, in its externals, is unreal, grotesque, a puppet-show; and the Chinese character is bafflingly devoid of emotion. It is, then, but a wooden story I can tell. Its tragedy is deep enough to me; but to you it will seem but a tragedy with the tragic part left out. I am sorry for this, for it is a confession of failure at the outset. I do not love the fiction which is mere photography, and yet here I feel myself reduced to the rôle of printing a blurred photograph from a faded negative.

Wang Lai-chee was my servant; after the European fashion, I called him Wang, although, correctly, if you presume to be familiar with a Chinaman, you should call him by his second name. Wang was a quiet, gentle, persevering man, with a thoughtful and intelligent countenance. He was a Hunanese, but his family had moved to Kiang-si, his father (now dead) having been a runner in the service of the late governor of Nau-chang, who was also a Hunan man; in China a high official cannot hold office in his own province. Two of Wang's brothers were employed in the Nau-chang porcelain works; Wang had been a designer there also, and had afterwards set up a small curio-shop in Kiu-kiang, which is the treaty-port of Kiang-si. I had bought up most of the contents of Wang's shop, and he had been promptly robbed of my payment by his father-in-law; he then entered

my service as 'boy' and curio-buyer, a position which he did not fulfil entirely to my satisfaction from a business point of view, because he knew too much about porcelain. A Chinaman who understands china will not buy modern trash, and would be ashamed to haggle over the price of an antique. A European, on the other hand, who supplies the European market knows that nothing but modern trash will go down as antique in Europe, and he has to get it cheap to cover his expenses. I was acting at that time, in conjunction with other mysterious businesses, as buyer for a curio firm.

But all this is by the way, and has nothing to do with the story. If I mention Wang's antecedents, it is simply because, in a Chinese story, I feel that nothing can convey verisimilitude except a bald statement of facts.

Now, this is the beginning of the tale. One night during the war the natives of Kiu-kiang were growing restless. The anti-foreign feeling, which is always the first inflammation when the national pride gets sick, was exhibiting itself strongly in 'foreign-devil' cries from a crowd down below on the foreshore. If there is one port more than another that is safe on the Yang-tze, it is Kiu-kiang; for here the Customs staff, under a stiff-necked commissioner and a reckless young ex-militia assistant, played bayonet and sabre pricks with the rabble during the 1890-91 riots (the only way in which British prestige can be maintained in China); here the French exacted a thumping indemnity for the pillage of the unfinished cathedral; and here only the little settlement has always maintained its right to keep and close at night gates at either end of the Concession Bund, which preserves to Europeans one cool promenade in summer. If you would understand the inestimable boon of such gates, you need not go as far as the first 'Concession' on the Yang-tze—Chin-kiang; you will see in our

own crown colony of Hong-kong how little room there is for the Englishman on the side-walk where Chinese are allowed equal rights. They literally jostle you off your own road; and in the Concessions, where the sombre Sikh police are not in evidence as they are at Hong-kong, they not only monopolise the only decent promenade on the river-front, but spit behind you as you pass.

But if Kiu-kiang thus preserves the haughty *jus Britannicum*, it is on that account the more dangerous when the native feeling rises to the gate-breaking point. Nowhere are Europeans more cordially hated as a body, and nowhere are they more isolated and numerically weak. The only *raison d'être* of the settlement, the tea-trade, has virtually disappeared, and it is two or three days from the nearest gunboat at Shanghai. I was thus anxious for my valuable stock of curios, and wanted Wang to take the more precious pieces to his home in the native city at the back until the trouble should be over. I had rung the bell several times, and not one of my servants had answered.

The kitchen-coolies' quarters were in a detached outhouse at the back, and I went out into the veranda to call. To my great alarm, I perceived that one end of the low building was on fire. 'Boy!' I shouted. There was no answer. Not a man was to be seen. But I noticed through the rice-paper windows that a light was burning in Wang's room. I rushed down and broke into the rickety apartment. Wang was sitting there alone, in a flap-eared cap, his hands tucked into his sleeves, his thick-soled boots shuffling a little on the brick floor to keep his feet warm, bending over a stool, and intently considering an array of marble draughts on a black-and-white chess-board.

'What on earth are you doing, Wang?' I cried, kicking the stool over and shaking his shoulder. 'Don't you know the kitchen is on fire, you bat-eared Archimedes? Come out at once.'

Wang rose and looked at me in piteous dismay. 'Oh master,' he said reproachfully, 'I little time makey finish the thirteen squares! Now I must to begin again.'

'Maskee, never too late for that,' I replied cheerfully; 'but can be too late to stop fire. Sao heich! Makey fill bucket from kang, bring me.'

I hurried him out to the water *kangs*—big stoneware tubs daily filled from the river for domestic consumption—and, seizing one of the pair of buckets standing hard by, with the water-coolie's yoke lying over them, I managed to get the fire under. I then assisted Wang to pick up his scattered draughtsmen, and told him to bring his board and box of clothes upstairs, in case of another attempt to fire the shed. I ascertained that the cook (*mafoo*) and coolies were all out with the crowd, and probably one of them had upset a *chatty* among some shavings on purpose.

After carefully packing my more valuable pieces in Wang's pigskin trunk, I sent him out to reconnoitre in the crowd, while I remained on guard at the gate of my bungalow. He presently returned, and reported that all chance of a riot was over, as the down-steamer from Hankow was in sight over the bend, and the Customs staff was under arms patrolling the bund. It is one of the anomalies of life in the outports that the sole practical protection of European property depends on Sir Robert Hart's cosmopolitan civil service, which is wholly in Chinese employment, with no other obligation towards white men than the sterling Anglo-Saxon blood bond—a bond far stronger than discipline; for on entering the service you are required in set terms to forego your national allegiance where it conflicts with your allegiance to the service. I believe that the staffs at every port are now provided with a stand of rifles, and they are ready to use them to preserve order; the British Consulates are sometimes equipped with an ancient rack of Sniders, but the British consul would risk his position if he were to do anything so repugnant to Foreign Office red-tape as to serve them out. Things are changing now, however, thank goodness! It is no pleasant thing to belong to the one great Power the effect of whose policy is to make its subjects 'lose face' in the presence of Chinamen, with whom 'face'—prestige—is a far more powerful weapon than gunboats. But, with our blood-brother Americans taking a hand in the game, we are going to change all that. We are going to teach Chinamen that their old friends are still their best friends, but that they must be respected. It is only necessary to hammer that lesson into them as a nation, and all will go very well. The Chinese are good business partners when prejudice is removed.

'Now, Wang,' said I, 'talky my what fashion thing that 13-square game?'

'Belong *wei-ch'i* [way-chee], master,' Wang replied; 'but I think you no can understand. All dis year I you boy, I learn to play with 13-square; to-night I just have finish when you makey bobbey. Now I must begin again; take velly long time, no can play only night-time.'

I shall drop the troublesome pidgin dialogue to explain as briefly as I can the upshot of Wang's statement. He was presumptuously attempting to learn the great game of *wei-ch'i*, the holiest of holies for the most erudite intellects of the empire, which I suppose no non-'literate' save the patient, studious, and withal astonishingly ambitious Wang has ever so much as attempted. I suppose you have read some description of the game; if not, then the sinologues who have recently undertaken to instruct us in things Chinese have singularly neglected their duty, for *wei-ch'i* is more characteristic, more bound up with the genius of the nation, than any other Celestial amusement—their interminable dramas and classical examinations not excepted. To call *wei-ch'i* an amusement is an

audacious irony; *wei-ch'i* is a science. Whist and chess are frivolous by its side; you may learn chess in a year, and be able to play whist in two years; but at the end of a lifetime the utmost a great scholar would venture to say of *wei-ch'i* would be that he had begun to know that he knew nothing. It is only comparable to the Chinese language itself.

Wei-ch'i is played on a board containing 324 squares, formed by 19 lines crossing 19 others at right-angles, thus making 361 points of intersection; 300 'men' are used, moving along the points of intersection—150 black and 150 white. One move at a time is made by placing a piece on a point. The winner is the one who surrounds the greater number of points with his own men, surrounds an empty point, or a point occupied by the enemy, who is then removed. At the corners and along the sides a point can be secured finally; but in the centre of the board there is always the danger of a besieging army being besieged by a greater one. An adaptation of the game has been imported into Europe; but for some reason or other it is child's-play. *Wei-ch'i* is not child's-play. At chess twenty minutes to half-an-hour is sometimes allowed for a single move; at *wei-ch'i* one move an hour is playing recklessly, like a novice. Towards the end of the game players will sit and look at the board for a whole day, at the end of which 'white' puts down a checker. Then he suffers a night of remorse and agony, knowing he has made a mistake. The Anglo-Saxon race probably does not produce more than one intellect in a generation capable of entertaining all the possible combinations dependent on a single move; the Mongolian race produces about a hundred in one generation. The patience, memory, and expansive retentiveness of mental retina required

for the study is made and not born. When the Chinese system of education, of committing thousands of alphabetical symbols and tomes of recondite philosophy to memory, is abolished in favour of modern science, *wei-ch'i* will be relegated to the limbo of lost arts. It is an intricate game.

Wang was not a 'literate'—that is to say, a man who had studied for the public civil service examinations, and who, although these examinations are open to all, is generally the descendant of a generation of 'literate,' inheriting the initial order of brain required for mnemonic studies. Although China is in theory the ideal democracy, the necessity for the artificial brain of heredity is the reason that the 'literati' have grown into a distinct caste of aristocrats. Every year a few outsiders creep in; but they are immediately absorbed and assimilated, and do not make new blood in the ancient order of obstacles. In spite of his birth and poverty, however, Wang had acquired a knowledge of his own language which for common uses equalled that of a graduate. But, beginning at the beginning, as he did, he had to conquer everything by perseverance—an excellent type of the Chinese nation at large, and a microcosm of its narrow, steadfast growth. *Wei-ch'i*, likewise, he therefore began at the beginning. He commenced with a board of 11 lines; when he had mastered the combinations of 100 squares, he added another line on each side, which gave him 121 squares, and so on. I had just interrupted him in his study of the 13-square (14-line) board containing 196 points of intersection, which was still little more than half-way to the combinations of the full board. He had been practising on this, as he said, during the year he had been in my service; the game which I upset had taken him two months.

THE CONVICT-CAPITAL OF DARTMOOR.

By W. SCOTT KING.



PRINCETOWN, or—to cling to the older form—Prince's Town, the convict-capital of Dartmoor, possesses three unique claims to notoriety: its desolate situation, and its romantic past history, and its terrible present-day associations. To be more explicit, Princetown is the highest town in England, and by far the most outlandish and inaccessible; on the granite-strewn wastes surrounding it cluster the stone remains of the Phœnician and Norse traders and colonists who came here for tin when the world was young; and to-day it is the 'long home' of some nine hundred of our convicts.

When this unparalleled assemblage of interests is remembered, and also Princetown's growing reputation as a resort for consumptives, it is not

to be wondered at that every summer its snug little hotels are crowded with artists, antiquaries, folklorists, criminologists, and patients. The strange little town is located in the innermost wilds of that vast and mysterious tract of country, half mountain and half moor, known as Dartmoor, or the Forest of Dartmoor, and is called with literal accuracy, though half in jest, its metropolis. On every side of it lie thousands of untilled acres of moorland, in the summer-time golden with the broom-plant, but always desolate and rocky, save where the treacherous bogs and morasses blacken its surface, or isolated peat-cutters' cottages peep from among its boulder stones.

The traveller to whom this lozenge-shaped wilderness is unfamiliar would probably be inclined to call it a mountain-range rather than a moor

when first he sees it, for steep black hills rise one behind the other like so many gigantically-curved waves to the misty horizon, each one surmounted with a rugged granite headland, or tor, as it is called, having the appearance of a crumbling feudal castle. Here is the birthplace, 'unknown, untrod,' of fourteen rivers and a hundred brooks and streams, principal of which are the Dart, which gives its name to the whole moor, and which rises in that elusive morass, Cranmere Pool, and the Teign, the Tamar, the Tavy, the Plym (hence Plymouth), and the Walkham.

Whatever conclusion archaeologists and antiquaries may come to as to its having once been a classic seat of Druidical worship or a settlement of Phœnician tin-traders, Dartmoor will ever remain one of the most ancient and significant landmarks of prehistoric days, and a happy hunting-ground for the tourist, the painter, and the collector of fairy-tale and legend. But our present interest is not in its 'sacred circles' or 'rock-altars,' nor yet in its mischievous 'pixies' and ghostly 'wist-hounds' which are still said to lure the traveller from his path and haunt the moor after nightfall, but in Princetown, the austere, granite-built capital.

After five or six miles of steep white road have been traversed on the way from romantic little Tavistock, and the quaint Merivale Bridge and storied 'Dartmoor Inn' passed, the traveller, from the top of his jolting coach, begins to observe a change passing over the face of the tracts around him. Well-built and cemented walls now mark the limits of the road; grazing meadows, of unlooked-for richness and colour, lie right and left; while wheat and roots of various kinds are seen growing in comparative abundance. Then he knows—or, if he does not, his driver will be sure to help his intelligence—that he is nearing the convict-city. In addition to this, it is more than likely that a military-looking warder (they are usually old army men) with gun and bayonet will be seen patrolling behind some stone wall, over which he constantly casts a vigilant eye upon the black-arrowed gang hoeing potatoes or tossing hay with their hands in the fields beyond. Or, quite as probably, the coach will be abruptly drawn to the left to allow a small regiment of close-cropped men in blue-and-yellow jackets to pass. Continuing the drive, the road now winds beneath the tall Lookout Tower, which is crowned by a powerful telescope and signalling apparatus, to be called into use immediately upon the sounding of the great prison-bell which announces that some prisoner has made a dash for his liberty.

After driving through a long avenue of trees, whose presence upon the bleak uplands represents years of careful culture, the prison-farm is passed on the right, and a hundred yards lower down on the left the cyclopean gateway of the prison itself. The most exalted town in England has

now been reached, and, it may interest some to know, the wettest also. King Charles II. is reported to have said that if it was raining anywhere in his humid kingdom it was 'sure to be raining in Tavistock.' This royal libel might be made with much greater propriety on Princetown, seven miles distant. The town is nearly a century old. It was built in 1806 at the direction of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, who was warden of the Stanaries or tin-stamping towns of those days, and the *alter ego* of the Prince Regent, and he named it after his royal master. The first erection was the prison, or the prisons, as it is customary to call them, which were built to accommodate the French prisoners taken in the great war then raging with Napoleon, and who were said to be literally rotting in the old, insanitary hulks at Plymouth. These prisoners of war seem to have carried away with them very exaggerated ideas of their surroundings, anathematising Dartmoor as a veritable Siberia, covered with snow seven months out of the twelve. M. Cotel said: 'For seven months it is a *vraie Sibérie*, covered with melting snow, and as soon as its snow goes away the mists appear. Imagine the tyranny of *perfidie Albion* in sending human beings to such a place.'

But, notwithstanding these climatic drawbacks, their fate was less unkind than that of many an Englishman pining in damp Gallic cells. Their parole admitted them to a free range over several miles of moorland, as well as, in the case of the officers, residences in Okehampton, Tavistock, and other neighbouring towns. In addition to this, many of them were invited to the houses of the hospitable west-country families, who pitied the captivity of the vanquished Gaul. The very inscription over the stern old gateway, taken from Virgil, '*Parcere subjectis*'—to spare the vanquished—testifies to the consideration which these involuntary exiles received at the hands of 'perfidious Albion.' How this inscription is to be interpreted in the light of the present use to which the prison is put it is not easy to say, though many who stand to read it think it has reference to the fact that a number of the present inmates are here through having their death-sentence commuted to imprisonment for life, they having been 'spared' the gallows. At the back of the prisons is a pretty and well-tended little cemetery, where many of the foreigners who did not live till the close of the war were buried. Some years ago it had fallen into decay, but a recent governor caused it to be replanted and enclosed, for which gracious act he received the thanks of the French Government.

There is one other memorial of their stay on Dartmoor, and that is the church, built by the side of 'the long unlovely street' by these compulsory visitors, and for which labour, it is well to add, they received remuneration. Its bare tower is to-day a conspicuous landmark for many miles across the moor. Besides a very imposing marble memorial celebrating the benef

cence of the founders of Princetown, the church contains a curious little mural tablet, 'To the memory of three Guardsmen who perished in the snow upon the moor, preferring obedience to their officer to life itself.' So runs the inscription. At the rear are the long rows of stoneless grass mounds which cover the unhonoured resting-places of the convicts who have died during the last fifty years.

The erection of the prisons cost £100,000; but when peace was declared in 1816 they became empty, and remained so till 1850, save when spasmodic attempts were made at utilising them as a factory for the extraction of naphtha from peat. In 1850 they became what they are to-day—our chief convict settlement.

But before anything further is said of the prison and the penal régime, one more object of great importance and picturesqueness connected with Princetown claims at least a reference. This is the far-famed moorland railway. As early as 1823 there was a horse tramway constructed between King Tor, the seat of Sir Thomas above mentioned, and Plymouth, for the conveyance of granite; and of this the poet Carrington has sung:

Lo! along the iron way
The rocks gigantic slide; the peasant views,
Amazed, the masses of the wild moor move
Swift to the destined port.

Upon part of this old tramway the modern railway has been laid, and train should be taken from Yelverton, where the line leaves the Great Western system, when the traveller will be drawn up by a panting engine to its terminus, fourteen hundred feet above sea-level, and will then be able fully to appreciate its extraordinary S-curves and wonderful moorland scenery. The line at times doubles upon itself in its climbing efforts to escape the almost perpendicular tors. As you rise among the hills you see a miniature railway far below, and inquire what it is. 'That is what you have just passed over' is the answer. 'And what is the railway coiling the hills above?' 'Oh, that is where you are now going' is the not quite reassuring reply. And so, among black blocks of grim-looking granite, and past green patches of bogland set in purple heather, mounts the little train, until, without any warning, the flank of Hessay Tor is turned, and it glides with triumph into Princetown Station.

Strange indeed does it seem that so wonderful and at times supremely enchanting a country should surround, and so romantic a railway lead to, a spot where centre the accumulated horrors of a thousand crimes—a spot in which one can never quite shake off the feeling of being one's self a prisoner. The stony-hearted 'city' chills the soul even on the hottest day and when neither armed warders nor sweating gangs are in sight. When the first inhabitants settled in Princetown, Carrington chanted of the coming moor-cultivation

which should 'bid the cheerful grass wave in the upland gale, and harvests bless the renovated wastes.' In some small measure the poetic prophecy has been verified. In dry weather those of the prisoners who are physically equal to such labour are marched off in companies of twenty and thirty, under the care of four warders, to the adjacent marshes, which they drain and cultivate with surprisingly good results. The less robust and the old and infirm are employed in the manufacture of baskets, boots, and post-bags for the army and postal service. To-day there are in residence nearly nine hundred men, who are attended by between two and three hundred warders. Every man has a cell of his own, lighted by a small window by day and an outside lamp at night. Books are allowed to any extent, if approved by the chaplain, and some are omnivorous readers of history, travel, and fiction. Each man is shaved once a week by a prisoner known to be an ex-barber, though for a razor he is only permitted to use a species of small-toothed clipper. Three months before liberation, however, beards are allowed to be grown, as one slight help in concealing from coming employers a disqualifying past life. The prison fare consists of three meals a day: a pint of tea and half a loaf of bread for breakfast, eleven ounces of roast beef or mutton and a pound of potatoes for dinner, and half a loaf and a pint of cocoa for supper. For his dress the convict wears a dull-yellow cap of the 'Scotch' order, upon which a brass letter is fastened, one letter for each period of servitude the wearer has endured. It is no uncommon thing to meet in the streets of Princetown men with five or even six of such tell-tale decorations. The thick rough jacket and trousers are of the same yellowish hue; but after a year or two the 'good conduct' men are privileged to exchange these for garments of dark-blue and a red collar. The warders tell you that a favourite form of petty insubordination is to tear to pieces these yellow suits, the punishment for which is that the 'tiger' appears in the quarry next day arrayed in board-like black canvas.

This is not the place to offer suggestions as to possible and needed reforms in the penal system, nor yet to advance some impossible ideal of remedial servitude in the place of the present one. Still, one or two features of the convict's life on Dartmoor may be noticed with disfavour. First, there is the oft-condemned 'cellular' system. When not at work—work is his salvation here, as possibly it might have been before he came—the convict leads an absolutely solitary life—a life of deadness, hopeless loneliness, and silence, broken only by the tramp of the sentry in the long corridor without or the howl of the moorland wind. This is calculated to eat out men's hearts, break down their spirits, and ruin them, as it so frequently does, both in mind and body. Again, there is the everlasting surveillance—good-

ing, maddening surveillance—more than sufficient, as cases innumerable prove, to provoke to insanity and desperation. If a prisoner carries a pail of milk from the cow-shed down the road, a warder is behind and before him, and he might easily smell the gun-metal; if he drags a trolley of stone or tosses a field of hay he is within a three yards' range of half-a-dozen musket-barrels; while every ten minutes throughout the long night, as the storm-fiend shrieks over his rocky 'home,' an inspecting eye glares in upon him through a hole in his cell-door. In one word, while fully realising the paralysing difficulty of the task imposed on the authorities, Dartmoor can hardly be said to be an ideal penitentiary, seeing that from the day he goes in to the day he comes out—and twenty years may lie between those days—not one solitary effort but the dreary hour's service on Sunday afternoon is made to instruct, improve, or redeem the convict. Dartmoor Prison is absolutely a *penal settlement* and nothing more.

Of course all the inmates belong to the Cistercian brotherhood—they live, if not under a vow, under a rule of perpetual silence. In honesty it must be said, however, that recently this rule has been but laxly enforced, owing to the reluctance of the warders to spend all their time in shouting out, 'Now, shut up there, will you!' But in the general observance of this rule of silence lies to a very large extent the safety and lives of the warders, and, indeed, the possibility of the working of the whole penal system as now conducted. Could the men freely converse, concerted action among them would then be easy, and no doubt constant, which would make it impossible for three or four or even half-a-dozen warders to be put in charge of the large gangs of prisoners; almost every convict would then require a caretaker. As it is, if an escape is attempted it is almost invariably limited to one man, and therein lies at once the safety of the warder and the failure of the attempt. If twenty men could plan an instantaneous 'bolt,' their guards would be wholly insufficient to stop them. At the same time, in most mysterious and round-about ways, they do manage to get news of the day, money, tobacco, and to plot, in twos and threes, for united insurrections. For example, the most daring and successful 'leap for liberty' which Dartmoor Prison has known occurred little more than a year ago, and one feature of it was made great capital of by the local and London press. About three o'clock in the afternoon a gang of twenty convicts, while working out on the moor, became suddenly enveloped in a characteristic Dartmoor mist. Three warders were in charge of the party, and the chief of these at once ordered a 'fall-in' and a 'march!' On coming within sight of the prison three men suddenly bounded out of the ranks and vanished into the fog. Fortunately for the fugitives the rest of the men had to be safely marched to their

cells before the alarm could be given, and fortunately for the warders five or six of these were within a few weeks of being liberated, and consequently were not likely to forfeit their twenty-five per cent. reduction of term by aiding their comrades, much less by following their example. The fate of the three was both comic and tragic. One was soon overtaken by the horsemen, and while leaping a low wall was shot dead. The rule is that a fugitive must be called to three times before he is fired upon, and then only his lower limbs are aimed at. Our readers will remember the severe censure which the press next day passed on the authorities for this disaster. Undoubtedly it was due to an accident that the shot proved a fatal one. No. 2 wandered about the moor for days, unable to find his way or to get anything to eat, and finally gave himself up to a farmer, who marched him back to Princetown and claimed the five pounds reward.

The fate of the third was more romantic. He wandered for six miles over the frozen moor, then crossing the old Roman bridge, he came in the early dawn of Christmas morning to the little hamlet of Pool Bridge. Here he broke into the dining-room of a Quaker gentleman's house; and, as the appearance of the room testified next morning to the astonished maid, helped himself generously to the good things with which the family had been celebrating the festive eve. Going into the hall, he exchanged his tell-tale cap for a silk hat, and his yellow jacket for a fashionable Chesterfield overcoat of convenient length. An umbrella and a pair of kid gloves completed his costume. But whether his sampling of the Christmas fare had been 'too well' or not, when he left the house in the early morning he foolishly set his face back towards Princetown; nor did he discover what he had done till a warder rode by and inquired of the fashionably-dressed gentleman whether he had 'seen anything,' and the tower of the church came into view. Terrified, he struck away to the right, and hid throughout Christmas Day upon the moor. Afterwards, it is current in Princetown, where the doings of that Christmas Eve are still much discussed, he confessed that many times he lay down among the rocks and bushes as he saw the glasses of the search-party pointed in his direction. When night fell he came to Tavistock, where he broke into a house at the back of the one in which this account is being written. Ultimately he got clear away from the dangerous neighbourhood to Devonport, and would undoubtedly now be beyond the water but for a most trivial and foolish failure of his discretion. Walking along a road in the outskirts of the seaport he met a policeman, who was accompanied by a small terrier dog. The constable nodded 'good-morning' and passed on; but his dog turned round and, as little dogs will do, began snuffing at the convict's heels. He, not daring to look round, imagined that he was being

followed, and immediately set off to run. The policeman turned to look for his dog, found it in hot pursuit, and of course joined in the chase. Capture followed easily, and number whatever he was soon found himself back at Princetown.

The most celebrated escape of the past, and, it is said, the only one which was finally successful, dates from many years ago, when a convict lived for three weeks in a peat-cutter's cottage, almost under the shadow of the prison walls. The grandmother who lived in the house was dangerously ill; but when the warders came to search the house she got up from her bed and gave it, together

with her night-cap, to the convict, who most successfully sustained the rôle of an asthmatical old woman of ninety. When the excitement had subsided he quietly left the house at night in the peat-cutter's clothes and escaped to America.

Every Tuesday morning some of the convicts are usually seen on the platform of the South-Western at Tavistock, but clothed and bearded, and, it is to be hoped, in their right mind. They are on their way to Pentonville Prison, where they will be photographed; and then, with two pounds in their pockets, they will once more taste the sweets of life and freedom.

THE LOST CAUSE.

A ROMANCE.

By DAVID LAWSON JOHNSTONE, Author of *The Rebel Commodore*, *An Unauthorised Intervention*, &c.

CHAPTER VI.—MY LORD IS ENIGMATICAL.

KENNETT must have recognised my lord at the same moment; for I heard him swearing softly under his breath, but could only guess his thoughts. For myself, I was not quite at ease. The Secretary's penetration and shrewd humour, veiled by a manner almost child-like, are yet remembered at Westminster; and at his best, as he was then, he was not one with whom any man burdened with a secret cared to bandy words. Now, as he briskly advanced, his smile would have disarmed the suspicions of a Jesuit—if they had met for the first time. One thing was rather surprising. For an invalid, my lord's movements were wonderfully alert and active.

'So you're there, Holroyd!' he cried, holding my hand affectionately. 'Well, such adventures fall only to the young. And your wound—eh?'

'A mere scratch! . . . Then your lordship got my letter?'

'An hour or two ago'—

So late? Noting the fact, I could not forbear a glance at Kennett. But he was standing with his eyes fixed on the ground, and a brow as black as a thundery sky.

'And was vastly relieved to have it. I start for London to-morrow afternoon at one, and meant to pick you up by the way. Now you have spared me the trouble. I was told you were here, but'—turning half-inquiringly to Kennett—'not that you had company. You will excuse me if I have interrupted you.'

The hint was plain, and I had no choice but to take it—whatever Kennett might do. So:

'My Lord Kynaston,' said I, 'let me present Mr Kennett of Langbridge, to whom I am indebted for a recent service.'

Both bowed, but Kennett's was of the slightest.

On the other hand, no smile could have been more friendly than my lord's. So friendly was it, indeed, that I began to scent sport.

'Mr Kennett is not unknown to me by name—and repute,' said he in his blandest tones. 'If I am not wrong, sir, you have ambitions of a public life?'

For an instant Kennett was taken aback, and then, 'Your lordship is misinformed,' he replied stiffly.

'Mayhap! mayhap! . . . Well, at the best, 'tis a thankless game. It may even be dangerous, Mr Kennett—for the losers.'

'Yet the luck is not always with the one side,' said the other, recovering himself.

'In my experience, 'tis with the side that holds the best cards, and the worst play is to stake everything on the chance of a *coup*. Better, if an old gamester may advise, to retire quietly—while there is still something to be saved.'

If Kennett suspected the significance underlying all this—and that it had a meaning I doubted not—he was wise enough to hide his feelings, and even to cover his retreat with some credit.

'And your own example, my lord?' he asked.

'Oh! I have played—and play now—because I have usually had the fortune to hold good cards. . . . But we must not keep you, sir. Doubtless you have other work on hand to-night?'

'None that your lordship's counsel would not lighten,' said he, bowing profoundly. Then, to me: 'You will not forget our engagement, Mr Holroyd?'

'I anticipate it with pleasure,' I returned.

He bowed once more, and so withdrew. My lord's eyes followed him to the door.

'A youth of parts!' he remarked, seating himself in the most comfortable chair, and signing to me to take another. 'A friend of yours, George?'

'An acquaintance,' said I. 'In fact, he is one

of the two gentlemen who succoured me after my encounter with the pad.'

'Ah! . . . That was a curious affair—eh? I must get your story to-morrow—I have no time for it now—and when I have leisure, we must see what can be done in the matter. 'Twill never do, egad! to have the King's servants stopped on His Majesty's highway.'

'And the papers?'

'They arrived safe enough—trust that rascal Joseph for that! He had a sound thrashing for his pains. After all, they were barely worth the pother. Do you know, sir, we have been scouring the country in search of you for a couple of days?'

I expressed my gratitude in proper form. 'But surely the importance of the intelligence'—

'Pooh! there was little that I had not learnt already from my own agents—and provided for. Mind, I don't blame your zeal, George. You had not my knowledge, and were quite right to leave nothing to chance. I had the clue, and 'twas child's-play to countermine the little plan of our friends across the water—who are clumsy conspirators at the best. After to-night, I shall be vastly surprised if we hear more of 'em.'

I had no reply to make: the revelation was too unexpected. How much had my lord discovered? Not all, I was sure; for I could scarcely believe that he was acquainted with the outstanding fact of the Chevalier's presence in England. And until the morrow my lips were sealed.

'But that we can also discuss again,' he continued. 'Just now I have only five minutes to spare. The Duchess of Chandos will never forgive me if I am longer absent from the card-table—and her charms. And, by the way,' he said, pausing to take snuff, 'are there any ladies at Langbridge?'

I fell on guard at once. 'That I cannot tell you,' I said. 'But at the Dower-house, where I was so hospitably received, there are two ladies.'

'So you had a pleasant time—eh?' he asked, in his most innocent tones.

'They were very kind to me.'

'And your host—what did you call him in the letter?'

'Morell,' said I.

'An old man, I suppose?'

'Middle-aged, I should think. I saw but little of him.'

He scratched his chin reflectively. 'Morell?' he repeated once or twice. 'Now, I wonder if I know him?'

'I have never seen him in your lordship's company.'

'No? . . . Well, perhaps he is an old acquaintance. I have a fancy that he is, but the name eludes me. . . . In any case, George, you were fortunate to meet him—and Mr Kennett.'

I assented, and hastened to divert the talk into another channel. We were trenching on ground far too perilous for my taste. Luckily I remem-

bered that I had not yet inquired into the state of his health. I did so forthwith.

'Never was better!' he cried cheerily.

'But—the gout?' said I, in some surprise.

He chuckled to himself. 'A little pretext! I had a twinge about Christmas, but, for the rest—between ourselves, George, the gout is a most convenient ailment. The truth is,' he said, beaming confidentially upon me, 'I had a certain affair on hand—you can guess what. 'Twas after my own heart, and I had no mind to be troubled with the fancies and claims of my good colleagues of the Ministry when I could settle it myself, and have some enjoyment into the bargain. Wherefore I stayed in Bath, howling with pain. To-morrow, having recovered sufficiently to travel, I return to London. You take me? . . . But yourself, lad,' said he, with concern—'you look more ill and worn than I care to see. You have not taxed your strength overmuch, I hope?'

I was beginning to feel that I had. Excitement had prevented me doing so hitherto, but now the effects of my exhausting ride made themselves unpleasantly evident. So I admitted to my lord that I was somewhat tired.

He rose immediately. 'Off you go to Combermere House, then!' cried he. 'Get some supper and a bottle of my Rebellion port from Deakin, and I warrant you'll sleep sound. In any event,' he added, with a whimsical glance at my travel-stained riding-suit, 'I could hardly venture to present you to the Duchess in that garb!'

Jesting thus, he accompanied me into the vestibule. A party of ladies and gallants was just arriving, and he drew me aside until the doorway was clear. Then, as we said good-night:

'One thing, George,' he whispered in my ear—'you may go to bed in the full certainty that His Majesty's throne is in no danger for to-night!' and, laughing, he moved off.

For me, as I stepped out and hailed a link-boy—for, my lord's house being at no great distance, 'twas needless to take a chair—I had ample food for thought. Mentally, I was in a fog. Either my chief knew more than I could have deemed possible, and had been quizzing me, or he was resting in a false security. Reviewing our talk, I could not decide which was the more likely; and I was still puzzling myself with conjecture when the thread of my reflections was broken (not too gently) by a most startling incident.

We were walking peaceably on, all-unsuspicious. Suddenly, as we were turning a corner, a sharp whistle sounded; three or four men threw themselves upon us; the link was struck from the boy's grasp and himself tumbled in the road; I was gripped by several pairs of hands, and had barely time to utter a single shout for help before my head was enveloped in a cloth or sack. I struggled my hardest; but, caught unawares, I had small chance against such odds;

and my strength was failing me when I heard a voice that seemed familiar.

'Curse you! Can't you be quick there?' it cried. 'Drag him on—help's coming!'

But again I was heartened to continue my resistance; and, doing so with every muscle, I managed to hold my own for a moment or two longer. Then, following a chorus of oaths and the thud of blows, I was flung violently against a wall, and thence fell. Barring a scantiness of breath, I was none the worse; and, disentangling my head from the cloth, I picked myself up, helped by the pair of sturdy fellows who had plainly come to my rescue.

'Hope you ain't hurt, sir?' inquired one, touching his cap.

'No—thanks to your promptness. But who are you?'

'His lordship's sedan-chairmen, sir. Sent us to follow you home—in case of accidents,' he said. Wonder how 'e finds out them things—eh, Bill?'

The link-boy was still on his back, whimpering for mercy; my assailants were disappearing from sight down the street. The whole affair had not lasted two minutes.

'Hadn't you better chase the scoundrels?' I asked.

The chairman shook his head. 'Our orders was to see you safe home, sir,' said he. 'Besides, they're two to one.'

'Let us get on, then.'

Fortunately we were quite near to Combermere House, which was reached without further adventure. Then, after seeing my honest protectors duly rewarded, I was glad to obey my lord's injunctions. But I took to bed with me a new cause of apprehension. I had recognised the voice directing the attack upon me, and I now knew that Kennett and his associates would stick at nothing to achieve their ends.

I was awakened next morning by my lord himself. Although the hour was unwontedly early—'twas not yet nine—he was dressed for the open air.

'Ah! you're looking hugely better,' he remarked as I sat up to greet him. 'Slept like a top, I'll wager? Well, the Rebellion port never fails. And, if you like, you can have another hour or two in bed. I only came up to see if you were fit to travel, and remind you that we start about one o'clock. Until that time I have business that will keep me occupied.'

I made to rise. 'If your lordship needs me'—

'Not a bit! Rather otherwise, to be frank. And, pray, have no anxiety concerning me, George. I may be abroad all morning.'

Then, as my drowsiness cleared away, I remembered that I was now free to speak. I durst not hesitate longer, and so asked him if he could give me ten minutes ere he went.

'Why, not a single minute!' he cried, his eyes

twinkling. 'There is too much to be done before noon, and already I should be at work.'

'But I have information that 'tis of the utmost importance you should hear,' I pleaded.

'Since last night? Well, it must still wait!'

He was moving towards the door, and I grew desperate. 'A moment, my lord! It concerns the Pretender'—

'Oh! if you have been playing with fire,' said he, laughing, 'I must leave the young man on your conscience a little longer—as a punishment. And perhaps,' he added slyly, 'you will do well to bide indoors to-day. After last night's brawl we cannot let you loose again upon the peaceful folks of Bath!'

He was off before I had another opportunity to beg him to listen, and I heard him humming gaily as he descended the stairs. Leaping out of bed, I threw on some clothes with the intent to try once more; but in a minute a shout for his lordship's chair from his steward, Deakin, told me that 'twould be futile. I knew not what to make of the matter, and for the solution must await his return with such patience as I could muster.

In truth, 'twas little enough. The day being fine, my enforced inaction was all the more irksome; the weight of my secret became heavier with every hour's brooding; and I could neither discover my lord's whereabouts nor form a tolerable guess regarding the import of his business. Somehow, however, the forenoon passed. At noon, when Deakin served me with lunch—by order, as he informed me—the Secretary was still absent; and, observing no preparations for departing, I commented upon the fact to the steward.

'My lord travels alone, sir,' was his reply.

'Without the household?'

'We don't go till to-morrow.'

'But surely that is strange?' I suggested.

'I ventured to say so to his lordship, sir,' he answered, with a shrug of his shoulders, 'but he bade me to mind my own affairs and be—You know his way, sir.'

'Doubtless he has an object,' said I, and wondered what on earth it could be.

'Twas nearer two o'clock than one when he appeared at last, bursting in upon me with the announcement that the coach was at the door. Albeit despairing of success, I made a last attempt to effect my purpose. But, as before, he would not hearken.

'What has taken you, man?' he demanded, hurrying me out. 'No more now, if you love me—you can speak to your heart's content as we jog along!'

'Then it may be too late,' I put in.

'Pooh! we can always turn back, I suppose?'

Outside, another shock met me. The coach was there, with its four horses and the couple of postillions. Only, instead of the well-armed servants whom I had expected to see in the

rumble, who should fill it but—Joseph, alone and grinning sheepishly? For one whose life was of such value to the realm, the protection struck me as being absurdly inadequate.

'You are never going on thus, my lord?' I cried.

For answer, he jumped in. 'Why, what is wrong now?' he asked, assuming a look of surprise.

'This,' I persisted—'the roads are heavy, and 'twill be dark long ere we can reach Devizes; that man behind is an arrant coward, and my arm is

useless in the event of a meeting with lawless people; and the danger'—

'Can be faced at the proper time!' said he, more sharply than was his wont. 'If you mean to get in at all, George'—

Having made my protest, I could but obey. Then the door was shut and the word given; and, sped by a cheer from the little crowd of idlers who had gathered round, we clattered off on the journey that was to prove so momentous.

COFFEE-CULTURE IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

By ROWLAND W. CATER, Author of *Out with the India-rubber Gatherers*, *Banana-growing for the Markets*, *In Quest of Mahogany*, &c.



COFFEE is, and has been for years past, one of the principal articles of export from each of the five Central American republics; yet the industry is still in its infancy, and each year witnesses its augmentation. Undoubtedly the very best quality produced in these regions is that coming from the Vera Paz district of Guatemala; and many buyers in England have become so used to this variety that they will have no other. Costa Rica probably ranks next in the quality of her coffee, always commanding a ready and good market; but Nicaragua runs her very close in quality, and even surpasses her in quantity. San Salvador does not export on a very large scale, nor does her coffee compare in quality with that produced in her sister republics; like Spanish Honduras, it is as much as she can do to satisfy the demands in her home markets.

Botanically, the coffee-shrub is known as *Coffea Arabica*, belonging to the Rubiaceæ order. It was originally a native of Abyssinia, but has since become naturalised in many other countries. When wild or uncultivated it will often reach twenty-five and thirty feet in height; but in plantations it is seldom allowed to run beyond twelve or fifteen feet. Its main stem is almost invariably straight, the branches being thrown off in pairs at right angles, thus giving the shrub a curiously awkward appearance; and its small green leaves are to be found principally at the extremities of the branches. The flowers, which are white, generally appear in clusters all along the branches, and in time give place to small globules of a dark green, which gradually change to light green, then to yellow, and finally to a deep red. When the fruit has assumed this ruddy hue it is ripe, and the twin seeds it contains are the familiar coffee-beans of commerce.

Although coffee can be grown almost at the sea-level—indeed, I have seen a very good sample grown in British Honduras at not more than one hundred feet above it—still, it is not advisable to try to cultivate it below five hundred feet, the

best and most convenient elevations being from two to four thousand feet. A natural reluctance to form plantations far from the ports of shipment led former growers to plant at the lower levels near the coast. Planters are now generally agreed, however, that many advantages are to be gained by planting at the higher elevations; and the writer has himself seen results, in many instances, which tend to support that opinion. Not only do the trees bear more freely and produce fruit of a better quality, but in the more temperate uplands the grower is involved in less expense for weeding and clearing, and this is a serious item in those districts where the growth of unfriendly herbage is so appallingly rapid as it is in the damp heat of the lowlands. In Nicaragua especially is this the case; and coffee grown on the slopes of the extinct volcano Mom-bacho, at, say, three hundred to eight hundred feet above sea-level, cannot for a moment compare with that grown in the districts of Managua and Matagalpa at elevations ranging from three thousand to five thousand feet. This latter district is inhabited by some twenty thousand or more semi-civilised Indians, whose sustenance consists of such game or wild fruits as they are able to procure from the immense forests surrounding them. In comparison with the generally lawless and unreliable *mestizos* or half-breeds, of whom the bulk of the population of these countries is composed, they form an excellent population. Though quiet and docile when fairly treated, they will, when smarting under an injury, real or imaginary, often rise up *en masse*, and on such occasions are a terror to the whole country. Ruled by a number of chiefs or *caudales*, scarcely more civilised than themselves, these people are held in a kind of respect by the Government of the day, which aims at keeping in harmony with them, although it is not always successful in its attempts in that direction; and in times of revolution both parties invariably send commissions to Matagalpa to enlist the support of these Indians; for, when their primitive smooth-bore are replaced by rifles more or less formidable, the party fortunate

enough to secure their aid usually triumphs. Of course, amongst these Indians there are some who are learning to till the soil. These either start little *fincas* of their own or hire themselves out to work for the few plantation owners, chiefly foreigners, who have settled down in the vicinity.

During my last sojourn in this district—towards the close of 1894, I think it was—Guillermo Jericho, a gentleman of German origin, who had succeeded in forming a very prosperous coffee plantation, was foully murdered in his bungalow on his own estate, and was discovered dead in his hammock next morning. The news spread rapidly, and as it was known that he had been into town the previous day to bring back the necessary cash wherewith to pay his labourers, it was the general conviction that robbery was the motive. I was staying at that time at the bungalow of Dr Gilman, an American dental surgeon, who divided his time between coffee-planting and dentistry. By some means or other—probably by a confession wrung from a confederate—suspicion fell on a certain Indian who had been in the deceased man's employment, and was now missing. Suddenly Gilman came bounding breathlessly into the bungalow, and rushing out to the back, commenced to saddle a mule. 'Grab a beast and come, sharp!' he shouted; and I, scenting an adventure, was soon in the saddle alongside.

In a remarkably short time we were joined by several others, mainly Americans and Germans. Off we went, numbering nine in all; and I soon learned that our errand was to effect the capture of the suspected Indian. We went first to Jericho's house, and the sight of the mutilated body, added to the fact that the victim had been highly esteemed by all his acquaintances, so fearfully incensed the party that, with all kinds of anathemas and vowing vengeance, they set off in pursuit of the murderer. They divided into two parties, each taking a different route; and our party—for I was still with them—after nearly a whole day's fruitless search, was just returning through the town, when we were hailed by the other party, also returning, but from the opposite direction. They had come up with the culprit, and had him with them, a stoutly-built fellow, bound hand and foot. Seeing that the object of our search had been attained, I left the little band and adjourned to Gilman's bungalow, for I had been in the saddle a great deal of late, and was anxious to try my friend's hammock for a change.

In the meantime the two parties, thus reunited, returned to Jericho's house, and on again viewing the now almost decomposed body, their fury passed all bounds. After a short consultation one of them stepped forward with a rope in his hand, and, making a noose which he passed over the culprit's head, tightening it round his neck, he slung the other end over a branch of a huge tree close by. Then, with a 'whoop' rather suggestive of Red Indians, his companions rushed

forward, grabbed the rope, and raised the murderer high into the air, where, after a few gurgled oaths and one or two gyrations and fruitless kicks, he expired.

Like wildfire the news travelled. The native newspapers, for days together, talked only of 'Judge Lynch in Nicaragua,' and the deed was condemned on all sides. I too, when Gilman, who had always displayed somewhat high principles, told me what they had done, could not help endeavouring to convince him that, to lynch a man, however guilty, without even an apology for a trial, was by no means commendable, and would serve as a very bad example to the natives. But he was an American, and tried to vindicate himself, pooh-poohing all my arguments.

A commission was sent from Managua by the authorities to inquire into the affair; and finally the eight executioners were apprehended and thrown into prison, also without a trial, a measure which was applauded by the natives. But the authorities were in an awkward position. Whilst it was absolutely necessary to inflict, or at all events appear to inflict, some severe punishment, in order to avert an uprising of the Matagalpa Indians, still they were compelled to act cautiously to avoid any disagreement with the American or German Governments, which, they imagined, might intervene on behalf of their respective subjects. To do the authorities justice, however, their almost proverbial wiliness did not forsake them; and although outside the so-called prison the *gringo* lynchers were very harshly spoken of and universally condemned, they were treated like lords inside, and allowed all sorts of privileges denied to other prisoners. Eventually, when the wrath of the populace had almost subsided, the prisoners were, one by one, allowed 'to walk out of the back door,' so to speak; whilst indiscreet and officious inquirers were informed that, after a secret trial inside the prison, the authorities were unable to bring the crime home to any one of the lynchers in particular, as all eight had pulled at the rope; and, therefore, they had deemed it wise to banish the lot—hence their absence. In reality their release was due to the fact that the only two unmarried men amongst them, in order to free the remaining six, assured the authorities that they were the actual lynchers, and no blame whatever attached to the six married men. Gilman, the dentist, was one of the two single men who remained in jail; but even he evidently could not have been detained there long, for I saw him in the capital shortly afterwards, a free man, pulling and stopping teeth once more; and although I never had an opportunity of asking him how he got off, being well acquainted with the country, its vices and its virtues, I found an explanation in the word 'dollars,' a word to conjure with in Nicaragua at all times, and in a law-suit an advocate infinitely superior to the cleverest of lawyers.

When the excitement caused by the incident I have just related had somewhat abated I locked up Gilman's bungalow, sent the key to him at the Cabildo, and set off to visit some of the coffee plantations in the vicinity. Some weeks later I visited several others in the San Marcos and Managua districts; and, taking advantage of these opportunities and others which were afforded me during subsequent visits to plantations in Costa Rica, Salvador, and Guatemala, I was enabled to study the methods of cultivation peculiar to these regions, and to compare them with those employed elsewhere.

In starting a coffee plantation, it is usual to commence with a nursery, formed by planting only carefully selected seed at the beginning of the rainy season. The temperature should not be below sixty-five degrees nor above eighty-five degrees Fahrenheit. The rainfall should be plentiful, and the soil deep, loose, and fairly moist, so that the roots, penetrating to a considerable depth, may find below the necessary moisture to counteract the evils of the parched surface above. The chosen spot must also be well protected from trade-winds. The nursery is composed of long beds or ridges about three feet wide, divided by narrow furrows. When the earth has been well loosened and broken up, the seeds or beans are sown at a distance of four or five inches apart and about two or three inches deep; and fine loam is sprinkled over them. The beds should then be protected in some way from the fierce rays of the midday sun, when beyond an occasional watering while the rains are not very plentiful, they will need no further care, and the planter may turn his attention to the plantation itself. Naturally, the land chosen for the plantation has first to be cleared; but as the coffee-shrub is tender, certain trees have to be left standing to afford shade, the greatest care and discretion being requisite in deciding upon the right amount; for if too much shade be left, it not only deprives the coffee-tree of moisture, but of the sun's rays also, besides preventing the free circulation of air. In short, the fastidiousness of the plant in regard to extremes of moisture, light, and air makes the successful cultivation of it almost entirely a matter of studious attention to those points when selecting a location.

When the young plants are from eighteen to twenty-two inches high they can be removed from the nursery to the plantation, holes being dug from twelve to fifteen feet apart to receive them. The main root of the plant, or tap-root, strikes directly downwards; and if this be doubled, twisted, or otherwise damaged, the development of the tree will be retarded to an astounding degree, so that great care should be taken to make each hole sufficiently deep to receive the roots destined to occupy it. The transplanting over, the planter must look to the

undergrowth. Throughout its lifetime the coffee-plant must be kept free from weeds, for it is necessary that it should enjoy the whole of the moisture the soil affords. As a rule the plantation should be weeded three times annually.

Usually, between the second and third years, when the plant is from five to six feet high, it is pruned. This operation consists in removing the middle shoot or extremity of the original stem, and then covering the wound with clay; and its object, obviously, is to promote the formation of new branches, to strengthen existing ones, and to reduce the tendency of the plant to upward growth. Pruning must be judiciously done, and at a time when the plant is not bearing. In the third year the trees will begin to bear a small number of berries, and at the end of the fourth year the first real crop can be harvested. The fruit should not be picked until fully ripe, as an admixture of green berries has a detrimental effect on the remainder. The harvesting is done by native men, women, and children, each having a set daily task of picking a certain quantity of berries.

The preparation for market is not difficult. When the berries are taken from the trees they are about the size of a small gooseberry. They are first washed in running water until fermentation commences, being afterwards put into a machine known as the 'pulper,' in order to remove the outer rind. The beans then appear enveloped in a species of jacket or thin skin, commonly called 'parchment,' and in this state they undergo another washing process with the object of removing all gummy matter. They are then crushed in a mill to rid them of their parchment coverings, winnowed, and finally spread out in the open air in yards or *barbecues* to dry by the heat of the sun. Women and children separate the grains according to size and quality, removing all broken and damaged ones; and this completes the operation.

With reference to the cost of planting and cultivating coffee, Señor Romero, the Mexican Minister at Washington, U.S.A., says that each plant up to its time of bearing will cost eleven cents Mexican currency, or, say, fourpence. The manager of the Barcenas Estate in Guatemala puts the cost in that country at four cents, roughly equivalent to twopence. As coming from nearer home, however, let us take the figures of Sir H. Dering, who has written extensively on the cultivation of coffee in Mexico. He says that up to the fifth year the cost of one thousand trees, including clearing, digging holes, cost of plants, planting, weeding, and harvesting, would be thirty pounds seven shillings and eightpence; or, say roughly, sevenpence halfpenny per tree. Therefore, if we take the cost at eightpence per tree, we shall, at all events, err on the safe side. Now, if a suitable elevation has been chosen, and the site selected where the general

conditions, climatic and otherwise, are favourable, the trees will yield, in the fifth and subsequent years, an average of two pounds of coffee each; and there should be no difficulty in disposing of the product at seventy-five shillings per hundred-weight or eightpence per pound. Thus, each tree, which has cost eightpence up to time of bearing, will make a return of one shilling and fourpence annually—that is, a profit of 100 per cent. The outlay during the sixth and following years will be considerably reduced, for it will consist only of the expense of weeding, replanting where necessary, and harvesting. Thus the profits will increase proportionally, and, making the usual allowances for the planter's personal expenses and interest on the capital outlay, deducting also a liberal percentage to cover cost of preparation for the market, freights, commissions, and emergencies, there will still remain a very substantial profit.

Of course the planter need not remain idle while his coffee-trees are growing. Once they are planted, he can turn his attention to side-crops, such as

maize, ginger, sarsaparilla, or any other product to which his soil is adapted. These will bring in small profits while he is waiting, and help to reduce the cost of producing the main crops.

The price obtainable in the market depends to a vast extent on the preparation of the beans before shipment. Several planters who have taken greater care than usual of their trees, studied the cultivation more closely, and gone to the expense of first-class machinery, are able to command much better prices; indeed, I have known some to obtain up to one hundred and twenty shillings per hundredweight for their produce. Others send their coffee in the parchment skin to London, to be prepared there by the most modern appliances. This latter step is very advisable. By adopting this method the grower lessens slightly the expense of preparation, whilst the parchment covering, if left intact, preserves both the aroma and colour of the bean during transit. In this way a much better price is ensured when the coffee comes upon the market.

MRS MILLS' ECONOMY.



ARMER MILLS, of Burt's Corner, put down the pen he had been writing with; and, with a grunt of dissatisfaction, pushed a sheet of paper across to his wife, who sat opposite, sewing.

'There, lass, that will be just four hundred pounds left owing when old Bliss has been paid his interest to-morrow; and, what with one thing and another, it's powerful hard to pay much off beside. Now, are you sure, Pris, there's nothing else you can economise in?'

Priscilla Mills pursed her lips and went on working energetically, yet glancing significantly in the direction of the old-fashioned chimney-corner, where sat an old man, with his eyes half-closed.

He had evidently followed the conversation, however; and, not waiting for the woman to reply, chimed in, with a quiet laugh:

'Economise, Abraham? What for? What's the use of stinting and cutting everything so fine—eh? I reckon you're doing handsome, to pay interest, and some of the capital off every year into the bargain, as you know you do. Why, when you married my daughter Jane for your first wife there was over a thousand pounds mortgage on this farm; and since then, between us all, it's down to four hundred; and I reckon that's good work, without economising much further. Economy can go too far sometimes,' concluded the old man, as he knocked the ashes out of his clay pipe on the hob.

For the word economise was not to his liking; he had experienced so much of it one way or

another from the present Mrs Mills that he was beginning to fear his last solace, his pipe, would be stopped.

Mrs Mills had waited ominously until he had finished, and then let loose the vials of her wrath on his head.

With a shrill voice she told him to recollect that he was dependent now on their bounty, and as such had no right to interfere in her affairs, as mistress of the house.

'Easy, lass, easy,' interjected Abraham whenever he got a chance, which was seldom, and which was all he dared say in the old man's defence, who had sat dazed through the outburst, and, without waiting for it to subside, betook himself off to bed, while the farmer slipped out to the stable to look round for the night, and to enjoy a quiet half-hour.

When Mrs Mills was in a worse temper than usual she always played a vigorous tattoo on the table—which was one reason why the old man and the farmer thought it wisest to leave her, the latter thinking that by the time he returned the paroxysm would be over, and matters would go on quieter for a time; but he was mistaken, for on returning the signs were as vigorous as ever.

'Abraham Mills, am I to be dictated to in my own house?' she demanded with emphasis the moment he had closed the door.

'Certainly not, my lass; but the old man meant no harm; he likes to have a say, seeing that he has lived on the farm all his life.'

'Say or no say, Mills, I've made up my mind, and I give you notice that John Walters shan't

stay under this roof many days longer;' and her face assumed a determined expression.

'Come, come, lass; don't be too hard on him,' replied the farmer, somewhat startled at the turn matters were taking.

'I've settled everything,' she replied, 'and so I won't be thwarted; but sit down, and hear what I've got to say here this very night.'

With subdued mien the farmer obeyed and prepared to listen, knowing full well that if she said the matter—whatever it might be—was settled, it was of little use his objecting.

She was rather calmer now; but with a look of acidity delivered her decision:

'As I said, I have determined that the old man must go, and that speedily.'

Mills looked at her astonished. 'Go—go where?'

Without replying to his query, she continued:

'He is now seventy-five, eats heartily, and smokes a lot—all expense; and, as he gets older, perhaps a doctor will be needed; or perhaps he might live ten or fifteen—ay, twenty—years longer. The Walters are a long-lived family. Why, man,' she concluded her tirade, 'he will be no end of trouble, and cost us two or three hundred pounds, maybe.'

'Ay, ay! Granted. But what the deuce are you driving at? Let us be knowing, woman.'

'This: he must go to the workhouse, and soon,' she replied deliberately; 'before he becomes a burden.'

'What!' he ejaculated, regarding her with astonishment. 'The workhouse? Why, the neighbours would cry shame on us, lass.'

'I care nothing for neighbours and their talk,' she snapped. 'Let them mind their own business. I tell you once for all, my mind is made up, and has been for some time; therefore, that settles the matter.'

The farmer blew a cloud of smoke, gave a whistle, but said nothing, knowing it would be useless, and that what had been said by his better-half was law, and nothing would turn her decision. Yet he felt a qualm of shame when he remembered what the old man had been to him in the past.

Yet, further, to his great disgust, his wife laid on him a few days later the undesirable office of telling the old man as to his future destination; and it was not without feeling very shamefaced that he broke the news, which was received in silence. For a few minutes the white-headed old man seemed unable to grasp the purport of the message. As he gazed feebly round the kitchen, with its heavy rafters black with age, and hung with hams and bacon in plenty, the tears trickled down his withered cheeks as he thought of the past, and the happy hours he had experienced under that roof, which was not to shelter him any longer.

'Economise, economise,' he murmured; 'is this,

then, what it means? Ah, me! Man and boy have I worked on this farm for sixty-five long yet happy years; and now I am turned out of where I ought to end my days. Economy's all very well; but doing right's better. Still, God's will be done,' he said, with a pathetic sigh.

Abraham Mills twiddled his thumbs and, shuffling uneasily in his chair, looked across at his wife appealingly.

But she was relentless, and as firm as adamant.

'Now, it's no use taking on about it,' she replied in a hard, matter-of-fact tone. 'You'll be comfortable enough in the "House," I'll be bound; and I have settled with Sam Wilmer to come for you in his cart at three o'clock, to drive you to Brankton; so the less fuss the better, and the sooner you'll get used to it.'

Sam Wilmer was a small, hard-working farmer and general carrier for the district, and his wife was annoyed when he told her his destination while he was harnessing the old mare. Sam's wife, Betsy, before she married him, was servant to the old man; and, in her kindness of heart, could not conceive a reason for the step, knowing how he had worked and slaved for them all. So the news upset her; but before Sam started she gave him instructions:

'Now, Sam, listen. After you leave the farmhouse with the old man, mind you drive with him straight up here. It'll only be a mile out of your way, and I'll get a cup of tea ready, and let him see that there's somebody who thinks a little about him, different to them two graspers up yonder—drat 'em!' And, jerking her head contemptuously, she departed indoors, flushed with wrath; while Sam, with a laugh, jumped in, bade Kitty get on, and started to fetch his passenger.

The old man sat for the last time in his favourite nook by the fireside. In front of him his bundle of clean clothes lay on the table, and knotted loosely in a handkerchief was a geranium which he had reared from one of his old wife's cherished plants. While he gazed around, absorbed in sorrow, Sam's old market-cart rattled up to the door. Mrs Mills stood by the window watching.

'Here's Sam. Now, are you ready?' she said, without the slightest tone of feeling.

'Ay, ay; quite ready;' and, taking a last look, he picked up his bundles and stick, and walked feebly towards the open door, past Mrs Mills, who held out her hand stiffly.

'Good-bye,' she said curtly. 'You needn't take on so; me or Abraham will come over sometimes and see how you are getting on.'

'Good-bye, missis,' he replied brokenly; but the moisture-laden eyes prevented his seeing the extended hand, and he passed out, while the farmer, ashamed at his own cowardice and the whole business, was peeping through an upper window until they were gone.

Sam spoke not a word, though full of angry thoughts, as they bowled along, now and again glancing at his charge, who sat looking stonily ahead; the old man never noticing that they had passed the turning to the main road to Brankton until they came to a cottage.

'Whoa, lass!' and the exclamation, with a sudden stop, brought the old man to himself, to find his old servant Betsy and her little daughter standing in the house-porch with a smile of welcome.

'Now, dad, let's have you out for a bit; leave off thinking about that cursed pair of sharks, and come and have a cup of tea with us. There's Betsy and the youngster waiting; look at them. Besides, it looks uncommonly like to me as if there was a storm blowing up from yonder.'

Almost as he spoke there fell a few heavy spots of rain; and, seeing the old man and his bundles safely inside, he quickly put up his mare and joined the others, just as the storm beat furiously on the window panes. The old man sat comfortably crooning an old song to the little girl, who was now settled on his knee, while Sam and his wife sat opposite communing together. There were nods and whisperings, and the end of it all was that their guest stayed that night and the night following, until it was settled between the pair that he should stay there with them so long as he lived.

Which caused Mrs Mills to remark, when it came to her ears, that if some people chose to be fools it was none of her business.

Two years later John Walters was laid to rest with his forefathers in the little hillside churchyard. Farmer Mills and his wife had been invited to the funeral, with several neighbours who had known the old yeoman, and, to their wonderment, Lawyer Framley from Brankton had attended at the graveside; and, after the last rites had been paid, he invited them all, with Mr Sam's permission, to return with him to the house, where he would have a little matter of business to settle and make known to them. All thought it was singular; but there was not a man or woman there who did not return, and all were soon seated in Betsy's best room.

After refreshments had been passed round in country fashion, Lawyer Framley drew a packet of papers from his pocket, and looked keenly around at the expectant faces.

'I must explain to you first,' he began, 'that my late client, Mr John Walters, desired me to attend at his funeral, and invite all who cared to come, as being more satisfactory, to hear his last will and testament read.'

'His will!' ejaculated Mrs Mills with a snap, while her husband opened his eyes widely; 'his will! Why, he had nothing to leave, man. What nonsense is this?'

The lawyer bowed with a look which told an observant onlooker that he held a winning hand.

'Pardon me, madam; but as to that I will now proceed to enlighten you.'

There was dead silence as he methodically untied and then proceeded to read the document which had been made and signed twelve months before, and in which he left to his dear friends and benefactors, Samuel and Betsy Wilmer, all his real and personal estate whatsoever and where-soever—duly signed and attested.

Mrs Mills, unconvinced, smiled grimly, remarking with bitter emphasis, 'Pooh! What rubbish, to be sure! He had nothing much but what he stood up in; and to go and make a will! Why, the man was mad;' and she laughed with derision.

'My late client was far from being mad, madam,' returned the lawyer stiffly; 'and it is now my duty to give a little explanation according to his last wishes, and then I have finished.'

'As some of you may remember, John Walters had a son James, who emigrated to Australia when a young man. He corresponded with his father for a time; but his letters got fewer and fewer, until they ceased altogether. Nothing had been heard of him for over twenty years, and it was supposed that he was dead. But he was not dead; he had married out there, and had lost his wife and two children; so, feeling lonely, he had made up his mind to come back to the old country; but unfortunately he also died before this decision could be carried out.'

'He had previously made inquiries, and knew at that time that his father was living at the old farm, so he had willed all his belongings to him, as sole relative.'

'When my late client was notified of his fortune it was his wish that the affair should be kept secret; and it has been so until this present time, as he desired you all to know that what had been done for him by friends during his later days was simply from pure kindness of heart, and not from expectations or greed.'

The lawyer inclined his head to Betsy, who was weeping silently through the ordeal, Sam squeezing her hand sympathetically the while. Mrs Mills stared at the lawyer, her features twitching with excitement and passion; and her husband gripped the arms of the chair and stared blankly around.

With an effort the woman jerked out spasmodically, 'And—what amount has he left, pray, after all?'

Not a sound could be heard but the rustling of the papers as the lawyer tied them together, and, looking straight at her, he replied quietly and effectively, sending a thrill of excitement through the room, 'Ten thousand pounds!'

'What!' she shrieked, the wine-glass she had held dropping from her nerveless fingers to the oaken floor with a crash: 'ten thousand pounds—lost—lost—for'—

A faint whisper in answer parted the farmer's lips—'For economy.'

HOW TO LIVE UNDER WATER.



O century of the world's hitherto chronicled history can show such a record for invention and discovery as the nineteenth; and its closing years, far from seeing any diminution in the number of secrets wrested from Science and from Nature, bring us every day further evidences of man's ingenuity and research. His fertile brain has controlled light and heat and motion, and he defies time and space. Now he is engaged in discovering, among other things, how human beings may live in an element that is, apparently, not intended for them. As the result of studies in this direction, the Academy of Paris has been examining into the truth of a very remarkable proposition, its attention having been drawn to the subject by the well-known physiologist Dr Laborde. When the question is known to be that of how man can exist under water, the importance of the matter with regard to the problems of submarine navigation will instantly be realised. That this has been possible to a certain degree is, of course, well known; but the system hitherto in use, of employing reservoirs of compressed air, from which a respirable gas was gradually released, has not given entire satisfaction, as it leaves behind in the confined space the residuum of all sorts of the human breath. Monsieur Georges Jaubert, formerly attached to the Polytechnic School of Paris, set himself, according to the account given by Dr Laborde, to solve the following problem: how to provide a person placed in a confined space with the practical means of preparing a respirable artificial air necessary for life. Taking for basis the standard idea that the composition of the air we breathe is 79 per cent. of nitrogen and 21 per cent. of oxygen, Monsieur Jaubert first examined air vitiated by respiration or combustion, and of which the oxygen had been completely exhausted, to see if the 79 per cent. of nitrogen remained intact, and if, by a special process of purifying to eliminate the carbonic acid and watery vapour, the normal air could not be reconstituted by an admixture of pure oxygen with the original nitrogen.

Numerous chemical experiments proved this hypothesis to be correct on all points. But the most important question of all remained yet to be solved: How was the oxygen to be generated? After long and patient researches, Monsieur Georges Jaubert has, he declares, discovered a chemical substance (the name of which he, not unnaturally, keeps for the present to himself) that will, by a single operation of extreme simplicity and within the reach of every one, perform the desired miracle. In the first place, it will thoroughly purify the vitiated air in a confined space of its carbonic acid, its watery vapour,

and all the other unrespirable gases, the result of human exhalation. In the second place, it will restore to him in exchange just the quantity of oxygen he requires. In a word, this marvellous substance, by its simple contact with air vitiated by respiration, will regenerate the latter entirely, and restore to it all its former good qualities. Various experiments are being made at the present time by the French Admiralty, and their experiences leave no doubt, it seems, of the enormous value of the discovery. The inventor claims that with from six to eight pounds of this new product it is possible to give all the air necessary to ensure life to an adult man for twenty-four hours, even in such a confined space as that of a diving-bell or the present form of submarine boat; and the trials made with it, both with beast and man, prove this to be no mere empty boast. Dr Laborde and Monsieur Jaubert intend to pursue their examination of the qualities of this chemical substance with a view to the application of oxygen thus generated to medical and therapeutic treatment.

There is reason to hope that this new scientific discovery will be of extraordinary benefit to mankind. If it is practically established, it is quite impossible to realise the changes which its use may bring about. The oxygen obtained by the new process is chemically unadulterated, and can, as far as purity is concerned, only be compared to electrolytic oxygen.

PREDESTINATED.

Nor always 'mid the toiling and the striving
Does solitary effort claim remark;
Not often in the fevered rush of living
Do single sparklets flash from out the dark.

Yet, now and then, some sweet, refined existence
Shines, silhouetted, 'gainst a dull, cold sky,
And shows us, with a pow' beyond resistance,
That it is purposeful, and cannot die.

For even when the golden bowl is broken,
And when the silver cord is loosed for aye,
We hold the words that helpful lips have spoken
To guide us gently on our rugged way.

God takes the Harvest, man is left the Gleaning,
And, to mistrusting ones, the Spirit saith,
'There is no Life without its perfect meaning,
There is no chance in that which men call Death.'

Sweet lives pass on: the world may never mind them,
And souls, though bright, may shed no dazzling ray;
But God will know exactly where to find them
When He makes up His jewels in His day.

Bring, then, O hearts! the first-fruits of your treasure;
Yield up your living, trust your sacred dead.
Weigh not the cost, for He who holds the measure
Will smooth and straighten ev'ry tangled thread.

NANNIE POWER O'DONOGHUE.